

In our inability to analyze the exceedingly complex interaction of the ocean and the land and the atmosphere, we ordinarily say that, so far as we are able to see, the occurrence of unusual combinations of weather is governed by the laws of chance. By this we simply mean that the laws of chance will tell us how many such combinations will occur in a century just as well as would the natural laws that we know must govern them. But the physical laws will give us the years and dates of the occurrence, whereas the mathematical laws of chance simply give us the statistical frequency of occurrence. Both these laws, however, will agree in showing that unusual combinations of events in one year will not be followed by similar combinations several times in rapid succession.

### BAROGRAPHS ON SHIPS.

In the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW for December, 1898, p. 567, we have referred to the first barograph used by any ship on the Great Lakes. Concerning this important subject Mr. Norman B. Conger, local forecast official and marine agent, states that the article quoted by us from the Evening Herald of Duluth had first appeared on December 30 in the Detroit Journal, and was written by himself. The fact that it was forwarded to the Central Office by Mr. Richardson had led us to a misapprehension as to the authorship. Mr. Conger's article of December 30 seems to be of sufficient importance to justify its reproduction in full. What he says about the use of the barograph on the Great Lakes is equally true of the oceans. The barograph was introduced on ocean vessels twenty years ago as a means of obtaining continuous records for scientific study, but it was soon found that its practical value to the navigating officer was of even greater importance.

It appears that the original introduction of barographs was due to the suggestion of Mr. T. F. Townsend, in 1892, then inspector in the Weather Bureau, but now section director at Philadelphia. Captain Townsend interested Capt. James Martin, master of the steamer *Roanoke*, plying between Milwaukee and Grand Haven at that time. The purchase of a barograph by Captain Martin followed at once, and it was used by him until his death, several years later. The *J. D. Moran* was the first vessel to be supplied by the Weather Bureau.

The present state of the subject is shown in the following copy of Mr. Conger's article:

The United States Weather Bureau has met with all manner of discouragements in its efforts to introduce the barograph, or self-registering barometer, among the vessel masters of the Great Lakes. The first barograph used on the lakes was placed by the Bureau in the steamer *J. B. Moran* in 1892, but it was not until this season that the instrument was given a fair test.

When the marine work of the Bureau was resumed this season (1898) there were forty barographs placed by the Chief of the Bureau in the hands of masters of boats of representative firms on the lakes, so that each firm, as far as possible, would be presented with one barograph. All of them were distributed during the season and used by masters who took the records of each week and returned them to the Detroit office where duplicates were made. The original records were filed at Washington and the duplicates returned to the masters.

The record sheet gives practically a record of the vessel's course and weather while on her trip. It shows the actual condition of the air pressure for the entire period, the state of the weather, the force of the wind, and the location of the boat at noon each day are noted thereon daily by the masters, so that the sheets can be referred to at any time and the actual condition of the weather ascertained.

The prime object of placing the barographs on the Great Lakes in the hands of the masters was to educate them in the practical use of the barometer in connection with the daily weather map issued by the Bureau. When they get the weather map as they leave or pass some principal port, the masters observe where the storm centers are and the actions of their barographs inform them of the subsequent movements of the storm. So, whether lying in port or on the bosom of the lakes, with a careful study of the weather map and by watching the

action of the barograph the master can keep fairly well informed of the progress of storms. These instruments show with great exactness and accuracy the action of all squalls during the summer by decided and rapid fluctuations.

During the season, masters who have had the use of these valuable instruments have said that they have received great benefit from watching the action of the barograph on their trips, and those placed on passenger steamers have saved the passengers many a hard shaking up, while they have enabled the freight steamers to make better time and with better weather.

The placing of the barographs on lake steamers was in a manner an experiment, as all vessels are supplied with the common aneroid barometer. Masters, in watching the actions of these instruments, do not get the benefit of the sudden changes which occur on the lakes, and are shown by the barograph, and for this reason many of the lake masters did not attach that importance to the use of barometers and the weather maps that they should.

A master, in leaving Buffalo for the upper lake ports, is in full communication with the Weather Bureau at least every twenty-four hours by receiving a weather map or a copy of the forecast, and it appears that there is no sufficient reason why the study of barometers should not be more general in connection with the navigation of boats. During the summer season there is probably not so much necessity of a careful scrutiny of the barograph as during that period in which the weather is more settled, and the storms, a few local squalls, are practically all that may be anticipated, and these are surely foretold by the barograph. During the fall, when the stormy season begins, a close attention to the weather map and action of the barometer will give much better results than could be anticipated from taking the weather as it comes without any foreknowledge of its intensity.

Of the 40 masters who used the barograph during the season, only three have said that its use was not of sufficient importance to them to be further desired, but two of these have since said that they would be glad to retain the instrument if it was desired by the Bureau.

The care required by the instrument is very slight, simply to change the record sheet once a week and wind up the clock, to record each day the state of the weather, the force of the wind, and the location of the vessel at noon. These record sheets are valuable for study, both to the master and the Bureau, and there is no doubt but that the Chief of the Bureau would be pleased to furnish all masters who have barographs on their vessels with the necessary record sheets in order that this valuable data may be placed within the reach of the Chief for the study of marine work on the lakes.

The one valuable feature of the barograph over the common aneroid barometer is that the barograph tells the story of the rise and fall of the pressure of the air at all times, so that should the master be absent from his cabin for some time and then return, the barograph informs him immediately of what action has taken place in the weather during his absence. The common aneroid does not make a record of these changes, and, in consequence, the master loses information which might be very valuable to him.

It is thought that with the intelligent use of the barograph in connection with the information which is freely furnished by the Weather Bureau, there will be a lessening of the number of disasters which occur through weather conditions, and, therefore, a material decrease in the losses of vessel property.

Many masters refused the aid of the barograph because they were not "fair weather sailors." They said that their boats were built to withstand all the storms that occur, and that they were expected to force their boats along through fair weather and foul. The weather men met them with the argument that they were not expected to run for shelter every time that the barograph indicated a blow. By studying the barograph and the weather maps the master becomes his own weather prophet. The maps show the storm tracks, so he is enabled to arrive at the direction and velocity of the approaching storm. This gives the master a chance to choose his course so as to dodge the worst of the gale.

### WHY DO BIRDS MIGRATE?

It is commonly thought that birds migrate because of the changes in the weather; that they seek in winter a warmer and in summer a cooler climate, so as to avoid being subjected to great vicissitudes of temperature. But naturalists tell us that the migrations are largely a matter of the search after food. They leave a given region because a specific food is exhausted, and they fly to another specific region because the experiences of the tribe as a whole have shown that desirable food can be found there. They are driven by hunger out of one place and are led by experience to another. It is not the winds that drive them, nor is it the temperature that tempts them.

We are led to these remarks by the following extract from a letter by F. W. Corliss dated St. Brides, Norfolk County, Va., February 14.

To-day closes the most stormy period I have yet seen in the south. But few hours of sunshine for two weeks, rain and cloudy weather with cold winds.

No matter what the weather was, rainy, sunshine or cloudy, great flocks of robins, meadow larks, and other birds were flitting across the pasture and lawn.

Snow commenced falling about 4 o'clock p. m. on Saturday and continued almost incessantly for fifty hours, wind north to northeast, northwest and nearly due west, with thermometer registering 20° above zero on an average, sometimes dropping to 14°, then rising to 24°. But when the snow ceased falling the thermometer dropped to 4° above zero this morning at 6:30 o'clock; 10° colder than I have seen yet in this part of the State. I think the depth of the snow was at least 8 inches; it lies in drifts 2 and 3 feet deep.

#### ICE JAM IN THE NIAGARA RIVER.

The ice jam in the northern or lower portion of the Niagara River is worth putting on record. According to the Post-Standard of Syracuse the Niagara River is frozen over from Lewiston down to Youngstown for the first time in twenty-two years. An ice jam formed along the river on February 13 and the river was frozen solid on the 14th from the base of the Falls to Lake Ontario, except at the Rapids. Above the Falls the ice is packed in high piles in the river. Much dynamite has been exploded to drive the ice from the inlets leading to the different power plants. In the gorge at the foot of the Falls some of the ice hills are nearly fifty feet high and one is said to be over a hundred feet high. Such a large quantity of ice has not been seen in the Niagara River for many years.

#### INTERNATIONAL CLOUD NAMES.

In the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW for July, 1898, p. 312, we have reprinted the description of the international symbols, as published in a circular of January 1, 1894, by the Weather Bureau. This was done in response to several requests for more information on this subject. At a subsequent meeting of the International Meteorological Committee, August, 1894, a system of abbreviations for the names of clouds was adopted, which is published on pages 18-19 of the Instructions for Weather Bureau Observers, dated October 1, 1895. So far as concerns the use of these abbreviations for clouds these pages of the instructions first went into effect at Weather Bureau stations in 1896, according to Instructions No. 56, dated June 19, when the modified code for telegraphing clouds was also authorized. In order that there may be no doubt that the last paragraph in column 2 of page 312 of the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW for July, 1898, is replaced by current instructions, the abbreviations now in use are reprinted as follows from pages 18-19 of the Instructions of October 1, 1895, to Weather Bureau Observers:

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|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Ci. Cirrus.            | 8. Cu. Cumulus.                  |
| 2. Ci. S. Cirro-stratus.  | 9. Cu. N. Cumulo-nimbus.         |
| 3. Ci. Cu. Cirro-cumulus. | 10. S. Stratus.                  |
| 4. A. Cu. Alto-cumulus.   | 11. F. N. Fracto-nimbus or scud. |
| 5. A. S. Alto-stratus.    | 12. F. Cu. Fracto-cumulus.       |
| 6. S. Cu. Strato-cumulus. | 13. F. S. Fracto-stratus.        |
| 7. N. Nimbus.             |                                  |

#### INCREASE OF SNOW WITH ALTITUDE.

In connection with reports from Colorado, alluded to on page 62, we take the following from the February report of

Mr. W. S. Palmer, section director for Wyoming. The snow on the ground at the end of the month is reported as follows:

Station.	Altitude.	Snow on ground.
	<i>Feet.</i>	<i>Inches.</i>
Dome Lake .....	8,821	48
Laramie Peak .....	10,000	25
Snowy Range .....	8,700	55
Do. ....	9,000	81
Do. ....	10,000	98
Do. ....	11,000	136

#### THE DATE OF THE MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW.

The Editor occasionally receives a complaint to the effect that the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW for any given month is published too late or contains ancient data, or is in some other respects not quite up to the standard of the critic.

Perhaps it is as well to say that the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW carries the number and date of the month to which the greater part of the climatological statistics refer. In order to gather together this data as promptly as possible all the forms for a given month, both for regular and voluntary stations, are expected to be filled out, summarized, checked, and received at the Central Office in Washington by the 25th of the following month; of the more distant stations, only those in Alaska are excepted. As soon as received at Washington the data is entered upon the forms corresponding to the climatological tables and charts that appear in the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW. The work of the draughtsman, the compositor, and the proofreader begins at once and occupies at least two weeks, from the 25th until the 10th of the following month. The first copies of the complete MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW are due on the 15th, or six weeks after the close of the month. The other portions of the REVIEW relative to forecasts, rivers, crops, and the short articles contributed to the text are usually prepared before the work on the climatological tables begins.

The Weather Bureau is allowed to maintain a very small printing office, and the publication of the REVIEW is accomplished wholly at this office. Delays must sometimes occur, owing to sickness, or the press of other work, or to the addition of a few extra pages and charts. It, therefore, frequently happens that instead of receiving the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW within seven weeks after the close of any month, our correspondents will find it delayed a week or two longer. Thus, the REVIEW for December, 1898, did not appear until March 17, an arrearage of four weeks, due largely to orders for special work, which latter always takes precedence over the REVIEW.

Although the REVIEW relates principally to the meteorology of the month whose name it bears, yet it is not absolutely restricted thereto, but also includes belated data from distant stations, and even interesting items or special contributions received after the close of the month.

#### FORECASTS ON LETTER BOXES.

Mr. F. P. Chaffee announces in the February report of the Alabama section that—

Through the courtesy of the postmaster at Montgomery, Ala., the daily forecasts of the Weather Bureau will be posted on all street letter boxes in that city. The carriers who collect the mail will post the forecast cards, which will thus be widely distributed locally by about 1 p. m. of the date of issue.

It would now seem as though the daily distribution of the forecast cards is in a fair way to become the most popular and efficient method of distributing the regular morning pre-